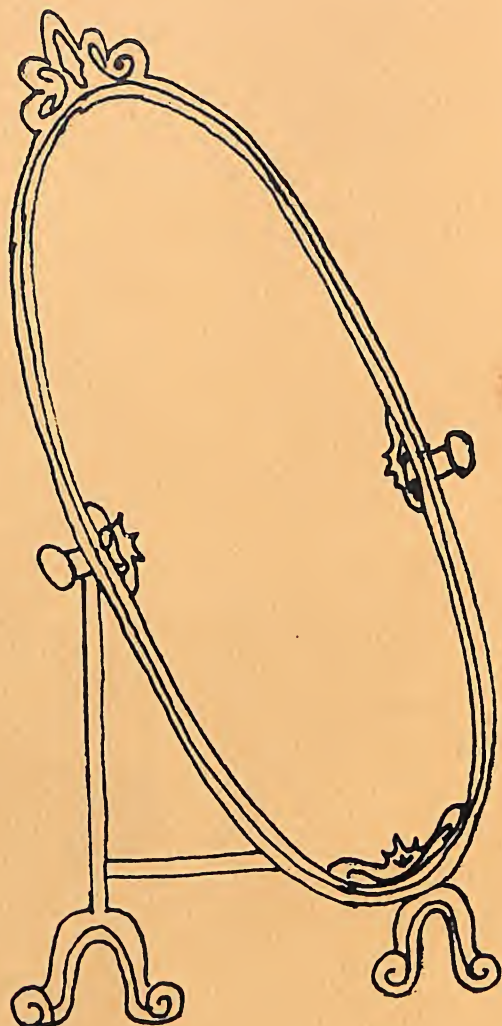


REFLECTIONS



1986

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VOLUME 18

1986

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CONTEST

Each year the English Department of Gardner-Webb College sponsors a literary contest for all student submissions chosen for publication in *REFLECTIONS*. Faculty and nonstudent submissions are not eligible for the contest. All works are judged anonymously by the *REFLECTIONS* staff and the final contest judges. This year's final contest judges were Dr. Joyce Brown, Mr. Ernest Blakenship and Dr. T. Max Linnens.

AWARDS

First Place:	Nocturnal Amplitude Modulation: Addictive Tones	Jack Folk
Second Place:	Fighting Insomnia	Roberta Lyn Borden
Third Place:	No Reason to Despair	Danny Reece

HONORABLE MENTION

Agitation	Roberta Lyn Borden
Nightfall	Roberta Lyn Borden
The Shell	Susan Hawkins

AGITATION

Eyebrows knit in a fury of deliberateness

frame the searching, flickering rage or your eyes. . .

Sweat-beaded palms grasp the leathered wheel with malice,
and the iron-clad shoe stomps heavily, accelerating. . .

Fluidly, your fingers find and turn the knob, switching from
one station, to another, to the next, and finally you

Snap

the blaring off.

Your stare is caustic, it shrieks with unreasonable accusation. . .

nothing is audible. . .

Need anything be?

Roberta Lyn Borden

ABORTING LIFE

The days of summer
Seem to have been sucked
Down into a vacuum of endless
Weeks that have now
Evolved into autumn.

Dead before even born
This season was
Dead before even born
The infant was
Dead before even born.
Will this coming season of nature's
Dying be any better?

Lynn Carpenter Keeter

ALL MY FLOWERS

I am a flower child,
And it is as though
All my flowers
Had died.

The peace, love, and harmony
That I have so long cultivated
Have no value
On today's market.

They have been displaced
By strife, hatred, and social unrest:
Stronger plants that need
Little or no care.

I refuse to turn
All my flowers under,
For I see much need
For these fragile flowers.

Should I die,
Nurture my flowers
With my ashes,
And plant fresh cuttings.
In the spring.

E. Pogo Costley

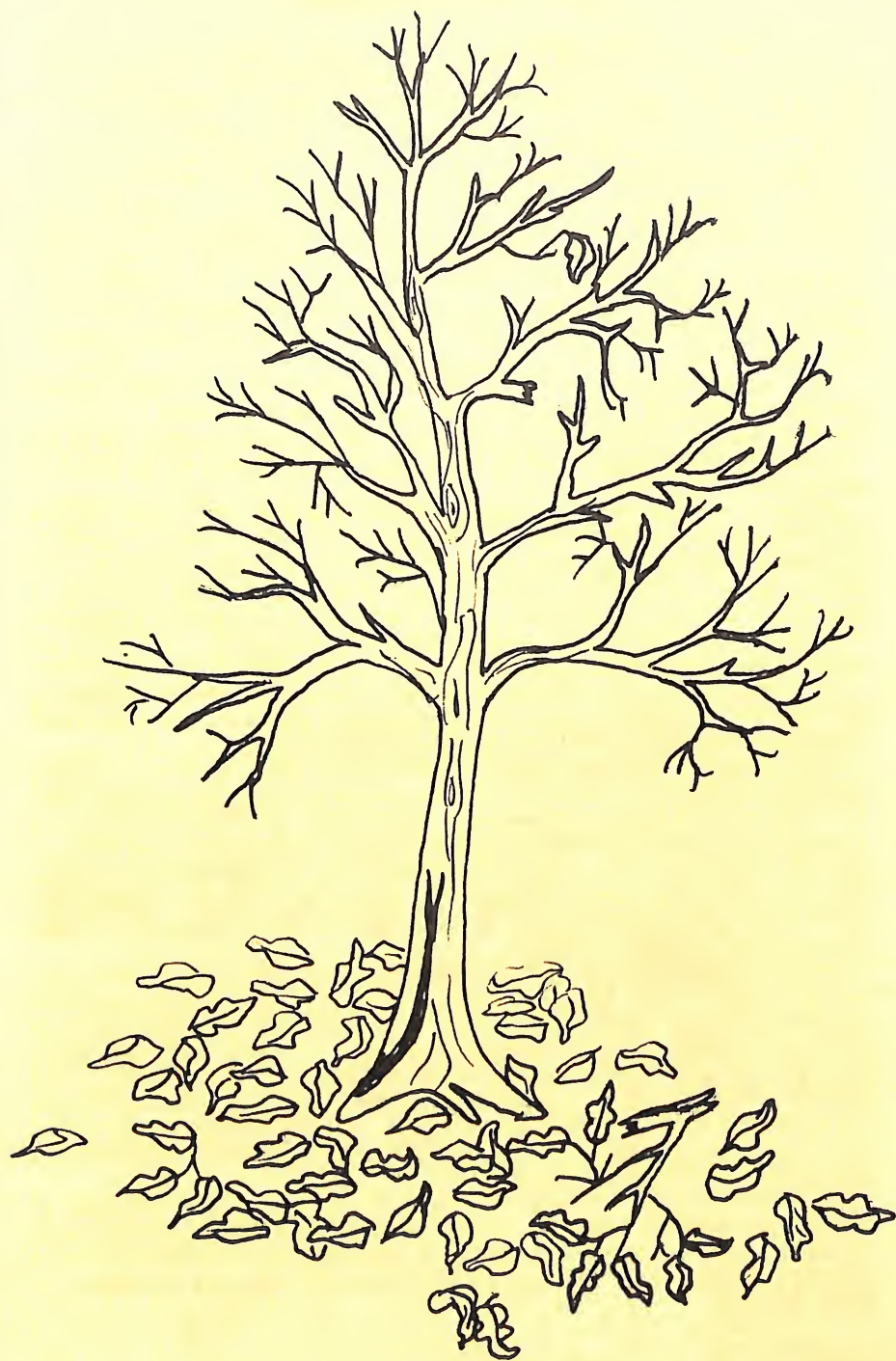
AUTUMN IS GOD'S BOOK OF DEATH

Autumn is God's book of death
To the common man.
All of nature disrobes,
Shedding brilliant swatches of color.
Brisk air is perfumed with
The musty smell of burning leaves,
And as Autumn's eyes close,
God covers her with the cold blanket
Of death.

I have seen many Autumns,
And scuffled through many piles
Of multicolored leaves.
I have watched Winter's ritual arrival,
And witnessed the beautiful burial
Of my dear friend Autumn.

I no longer fear death:
I anticipate the beautiful translation
And will welcome Winter
Like an old friend.
I have read God's book of death,
And I wish for you to watch
For the brilliant colors
That I will leave behind.

E. Pogo Costley



BACK TO SCHOOL AGAIN

It was back to school again at our community college, and all my anxieties had finally come to a head. I was an ambitious sophomore and all set for the three R's; and even that much-dreaded course in Creative Writing. Or so I thought. At least up until a few days later when our writing instructor gave us this unusual assignment of comparing people's walking habits with those of animals' walking habits. My first impulse was to approach my professor with staunch disapproval, reminding him of our fine Americal culture. Imagine: We, who are the envy of all other civilizations are definitely not to be compared with dumb creatures that crawl, hop, or jump upon this earth. And with pencil shoved behind my ear, and mouth salivating with keen determination, I approached my superior's stern countenance from where he sat behind a cluttered desk, and proceeded to give him a piece of my mind. . . .

Of course it was not until sometime later as I was crouched outside behind the Student Activities Building feeling like a defeated Ivy-League Sherlock Holmes, that I relented that it really wasn't such a good idea to act on first impulse anyway. And as for giving away a "piece of my mind," I didn't have it to spare.

Sherlock, I reasoned with myself, (peeking around the corner of the building), you'll never live this down! People just don't walk around like Walt Disney's Wild Kingdom. We're civilized human beings who walk with much more poise and- Wha-? Who? Why, there goes a plowhorse! Of all things, a plowhorse on college campus! Those hips- one slowly lifting above the other. And then CLONK! on the paved walk. And that lazy swing. There's absolutely no mistaking it! She's a plowhorse! (Suddenly, I was back in the middle of Dad's twenty-acre cotton patch in the hot July sun. I was wearing my one pair of ragged jeans and seeing only the rear bumper of this unmechanized plow-puller through my sweat-burning eyes.)

Okay, Sherlock, that's enough! I scolded myself, blinking my eyes. This is Big City, U.S.A., with the fast sports car and busy shopping centers. Why, that poor girl has probably never ever seen a- Well, glory be! Here comes a monkey! Now, isn't that absurd! Who ever heard of a college co-ed walking like a monkey! But look at her sail through the air! Her skinny limbs are flying in all directions, and there goes her books up in the air! What's that she's shouting! She passed Mr. Moss's test? So that's what the monkey business is all about!

Now, really, Sherlock! I reprimanded myself again. You know this foolishness is unfair to those poor kids. After all, what right do you have sneaking out here, camouflaged in your school-boy outfit, eye-balling these innocent, sincere- Well, I'll be John Brown! Here comes a rooster! Clucking merrily to the tune of "You get two pieces of Kentucky Fried Chicken. . . roll and coleslaw!" He stopped, cocked one beady eye in my direction, flapped his book-laden wings importantly and continued strutting his well-rounded thighs on past a group of dainty chicks. Humph! I snorted. You'd think he's the only rooster in the henhouse!

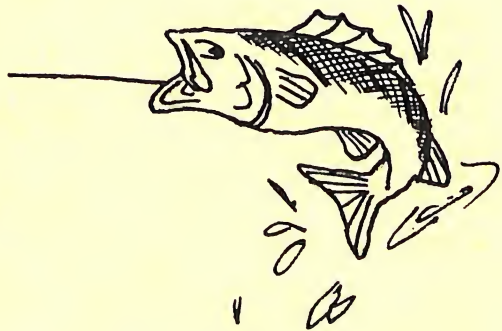
My pencil dropped, bringing me back to my senses. How in the name of higher education did I ever get into such foolishness? And I thought I was going to learn creative writing. Suddenly, disgusted with the whole mess, I shoved my binoculars in my pouch, nibbled on my carrot, and hopped on back to class.

Ruth McDaniel

CAPTURE

Stab the slimy creature with the
Sharp round sword.
Throw him with as much force as the arm can summon
And watch him descend quickly to shatter the
Glass-clear liquid.
At the first sign of motion on his
Hanging-rope
Bring him back into the daylight
In the clutches of a captured fish!

Bobby Hammond



CONFESSIONS

My mouth does not pour forth
The same honey that sometimes graces the page.
Days' worth of thoughts can be
Fitly woven into half a page,
And then I am left no words.

Forgive my frequent silence;
I am listening to the music of your voice,
Or some ancient tune
That I recall.

Should my words seem awkward
It may be that I am gazing
Into your eyes, or into space,
Whichever seems at present the most friendly.

I have said that you have pretty eyes,
And I have asked all the appropriate questions.
I know that time must work
In your heart and mind. . . and soul.

I will wait here silently,
Confused as always.
Forgive me
If I stole your attention:
I only wanted
To be wanted.

E. Pogo Costley

FIFTY-SIX DAYS

It is hard
to study microscopic print through
scarlet-streaked
white
while coloring pictures of an
April night
in the margins of my
mind.

It is hard
feeling the iron of the steel-vice
cutting
the parchmented skin of my temples
in two while I
wait.

It is hard
feeling
the flat, coarse
carpet under my toes
and the processed
air
about my head.

It is hard
considering
a dot on a table-sprawled
map
knowing you are
there and I am here
pondering maps.

That is hard.

Roberta Lyn Borden

FIGHTING INSOMINA

Slide into crackling cotton, one leg at a time,
savoring the moment.
Tug stubbornly at the blanket and shrug it up,
around your neck. Lie back with a slow exhaling
motion,
and wait.
Stare nervously at the spectrum of charcoal shadows which
breathe and live in the quiet chill, and feel it slide
up your back,
until you are covered with pox.
Hum a low melody from deep in your throat, perhaps something
from your childhood,
and wait.
Impatiently watch the glowing numbers fly. . . and wriggle. . .
from right side to left side. . . from stomach to back.
Rub frosty toes together and conjure bounding images of
ivory wool, one after the other, in your pulsing mind.
Finally, sit up and press your nose against the frigid pane,
and gaze up at the quiet stars which sparkle brilliantly this night.
Again lower yourself into the warm bed clothes,
scrunch your pillow under your head just right
(everyone does this differently)
and think about someone (someone special).
Feel a smile stretch across your half-smothered face,
and the warmth spread throughout. . .
and wait for now drooping lids.
to fall.

Roberta Lyn Borden

I LOVE YOU. . .

More than a mountain,
Covered with fresh, white snow.
More than an autumn tree,
Spreading colored leaves below.
More than the ocean
Or a little baby's cry.
More than a morning sunrise
Spreading color across the sky.
More than a stream in the meadow,
Or the precious gift of sight.
More than a taste of sunshine,
Or a breezy summer night.
Oh, wouldn't life be perfect,
Wouldn't the sky turn blue,
And wouldn't the world be wonderful,
If you would love me, too?

Melanie Lynch

I NEVER KNEW I HAD SO MUCH

"You're supposed to thank God for the trials in your life. He uses them to strengthen you and prepare you for His plan." I'd heard Mr. Murphy, our youth director, say that, but I never really thought about the meaning until the summer of '83.

Things just weren't enough any more. I felt so out of place around my peers. I had always wanted to be part of the popular crowd, but their membership rules were very strict. In order to be one of them you had to wear Izod shirts, designer jeans, have a fancy car, and be a popular athlete. I had none of these requirements.

I started to feel ashamed of my family. I didn't want anyone to come and see our house because it is a rented house in a housing development. Whenever my mom took me somewhere, I would make her let me out about a block away. I didn't want anyone to see our awful car.

My mother and I seemed to disagree all the time. She treated me like a baby. I couldn't go outside after dark. I had to be home by 10:30 p.m., just when all my friends were getting started. When she was gone at night, she hired a baby sitter for me. At the age of 16 that's a little unbearable. It was so strange; in another sense she said you need to grow up, but the other sense she wanted me to stay the same little girl who had always been her little darling. Becoming a young adult is the hardest thing a person can go through. I felt as if my mom didn't understand how I felt. I thought God was punishing me for something, but I didn't know what.

I felt self-conscious because we couldn't afford the clothing that was in style. I wore what I had and hated myself. Because of the feeling I had for myself I couldn't fulfill my Christian duties. My personal walk with God suffered because I had built a wall around myself.

As the school year was coming to a close, our church youth group was planning a mission trip to the inner city of Philadelphia. I had prayed about going, and I felt that God wanted me to go. The youth went through months of study. As time grew near, I became very excited.

July finally arrived. The bus trip up took about 17 hours. It was very late when we arrived, but the sidewalks were full of teenagers just hanging around. I had seen scenes like this in the movies; I had never dreamed that I would see it in real life. We were to sleep in the upstairs of the huge church. The next day was Sunday, so we got up and got dressed, as usual. I didn't expect any major difference in church, but I was fooled. The people came in their everyday clothes. The women didn't wear dresses. Some people looked as if they just got up, or didn't go to bed at all. When church started, I noticed that the mission team was bigger than the congregation. The congregation listened to the preachers bring the message. As I looked around the beautiful church, I could feel the sweet spirit of God.

After the church service, we went visiting. When I walked out of the church, I knew I was in a whole different world. The houses weren't houses; they were three story apartments. The soft, lovely grass I was used to was replaced by hard asphalt. The buildings in which the children lived didn't have any yards, porches, or anywhere for them to play. The children and their rather large families had to live in crowded conditions. After visiting, we went back to the church, and I prayed a prayer just to say, "Thank You, God. I didn't know people had to live like that. I am so blessed to have such a wonderful house and clean, safe neighborhood."

The next week we were to have Bible School. I was to help teach 3rd and 4th graders. When the children came, my heart sank. The 3rd and 4th grade children that I have always seen have little dresses, cute little suits, knee-high socks, polished shoes, all washed clean, and their hair neatly fixed. As these smiling children came in, I noticed that they didn't wear cute little dresses, cute little suits, or socks. Their shoes were full of holes; no one had taken time to wash their little faces, and no one had cared enough even to comb their hair. But these kids were the same, in a sense, as any other, for these kids wanted to be loved and wanted. They needed a word of encouragement. I loved these kids so much. For the first time in my life I felt selfish for wanting more when I already had so much. During the summer vacation, the church was a center for lunches for the children, provided by the Government. The children lined up outside the church till time for lunch. When it was time to eat, the children came in and sat in groups of 10 on the floor. A small meal was then served. The children tore into the lunch and devoured it. It was obvious that they hadn't eaten in a while. The week went pretty much the same. I felt as if I were in a dream. It was so hard to believe.

We had planned a trip to the beach with the youth of this church. I really liked talking to them. I met one youth. We spent the day together discussing our families and schools. We talked about God and how much love He had. John told me that his mother wasn't at all like mine. He said that sometimes she made him leave. When I told him how over-protected I was, he looked at me and said, "At least your mother cares about you. Just think, your mother doesn't beat you. She doesn't get drunk, or she isn't on drugs. She even cares enough about you to give you rules." He told me that he wished he had a family like mine. He was so right. I had never thought about it like that. My mother doesn't drink; she doesn't take drugs; and she's always there when I need her. Her rules had always seemed old-fashioned and stupid to me before, but now I know my mother loves me more than I ever realized. Without rules, growing up could have been even harder. I also know that I have more blessings than any person could ever need. I was given the blessing of a wonderful, caring mother.

After the week was over, I knew God had used it to tell me how blessed I really was. God also used this trip to reveal his plan for my life. I know that God wants me to help people whether it be a missionary or doctor. As we were going home, I thought of those words Mr. Murphy had said, "You're supposed to thank God for the trials in your life. He uses them to strengthen you and to prepare you for His plan." God used this trip to show me the meaning of those words. I never knew I had so much.

Yvonne Sullivan

IMAGINE

Imagine what living in a world of silence is like. . .

Never to hear the words, "I love you," or the telephones' ring-a-ling.

Never to hear the exploring bumblebee until you feel his sting.

Never to hear the clickety-click of a ten-speed bike.

Never to hear a soft whisper, or a knock at the door.

Never to hear the deep rumbling after a bright flash of lightning.

Never to hear the tapping and pounding of rain drops falling.

Never to hear the echo of high heels as they skip across the wooden floor.

Never to hear tiny Sara's whimpering cry, or a fierce watchdog's bark.

Never to hear the "Rock Show" on WGWG, Michael Jackson's "Beat It" play.

Never to hear spiritfilled carolling on a cold Christmas day.

Never to hear boistrous children as they play football in the park.

Never to hear a prophetic message, or a favorite old-time hymn.

Never to hear a flock of birds chirping in the early morning.

Never to hear your own children one day laughing and singing.

Never to hear excited basketball fans cheering in a spacious gym.

Never to hear the crashing of ocean waves as they repeatedly roll in.

Never to hear the clapping of appreciative cupped hands.

Never to hear the beat and the rhythm of Rock-n-Roll bands.

Never to hear a car's running motor as you turn the ignition.

You, who have ears to hear,

Imagine instead, using your eyes and the sense of touch to hear.

You, who have ears to hear, listen.

Imagine what living in a world of silence is like.

Dedicated to All Hearing Impaired

Especially

Michelle, Jill, Mary, Linda, Tonya, Russell and Margaret

Janet Kay Curry

IN MEMORY:
SIDNEY B. GAMBILL

Somewhere amid desolate hills
Enveloped in the ultimate cradle
Sleeps an echo.
There the weary fields lie in
Dulcet harmony with their comrade.

The very land chants melodies
Of thankfulness as the arms of
Nature protect its warrior
And pines forever whisper
Lays of admiration.

Resting in a desiccated
Dogwood, a cardinal's
Feathers are tousled in
The wind as fond recollections
Fall upon the land.

D. David VanHoy

LEADING HORSES

I have led many horses to water,
And waited patiently.
I stoop to draw from the depths,
Cool, pure smacks of euphoria
That refresh the heart and soul.

My reflection casts itself
Back at me, twisting,
Allowing the pool
To distort my appearance,
And this disturbs
My timid friend.

There is now water within,
Water which yearns to pour forth,
Bathing all those about with love.
Still my horse will not drink.

Horses which will not drink
Die quietly in the desert.
They become prey for vultures
And coyotes with icy eyes.

I sit amidst the dust and cactus
Smoking, and watching the sunset.
We will camp here tonight,
My horse and I,
And perhaps in the morning
She will drink.

I will cry myself to sleep
Knowing that
If she does not drink,
I shall die also.

My tears will leave
Crusty trails of salt
On my cheeks:
Crystals to glisten
In the desert moonlight.

E. Pogo Costley

LOOK INTO MY EYES

Look into my eyes —
All you will see is a cloud of hurt and confusion.
(I have learned to hide my true self).

I present to the world a blank, unfeeling stare;
I am dull to pain, foreign to love.
I have blocked myself in, built a wall of defense against
The hurt, the lies, the misunderstandings;
I have trusted once too often.

“It won’t happen again.”
I console myself with this false promise.
It is an empty hope —
For I know I will fall into the tempter’s snare
Again and again.

And each time you will look into my eyes and see not the hurt,
For it will remain hidden, hidden deep within.
I will keep it hidden because I am afraid to trust.

Someday I pray, the wall will be destroyed
By one who knows and understands, by one who also has a wall.

Until then,
Look into my eyes,
For you will not see the truth.

Julie Beam

LEFT HANGING

I left your vacant body hanging
languidly in that narrow chamber.

You had an open wound, unpatched,
unclean.

Your slate gray appearance left
me uneasy.

I'm bewildered by your indifference
to the frigid sensation of ice blue
metal supporting your inanimate,
wrinkled assemblage.

The proposition of your destiny
leaves me in derangement.

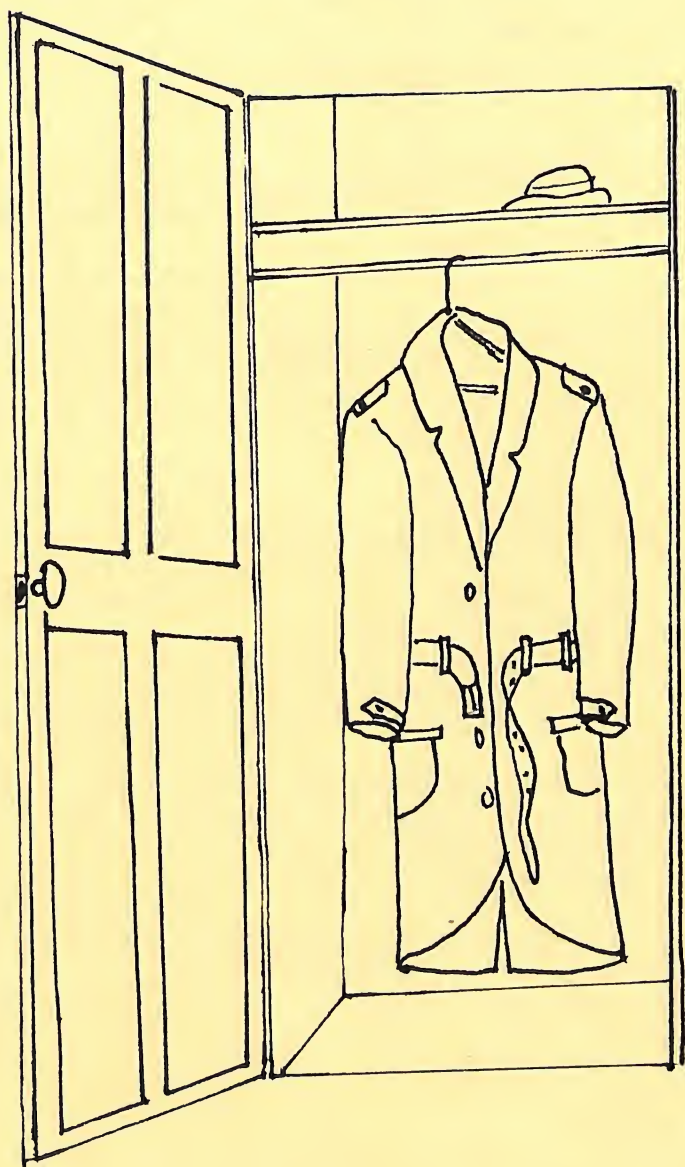
Shall I unburden my soul
and consign you to oblivion?

No.
That I cannot do.

You are all I have to rebuff
the benumbed air during its incursion
of my body.

You are all I have to keep me warm.

Jack Folk



LOVE

Love, never spent,
 never pays.
Love, never given,
 never stays.
Love, never shared,
 never shows.
Love, never sown,
 never grows.

Carol Ann Smith

READING

There is a hole
In my mind's pocket
And all my cleverness
Has slipped out,
Scattered to the wind's whims.

Nubile women
Slip by me effortlessly,
And I have no words
With which to pass
The time of day.

Just when I thought
All hope was lost,
She said "Sing me
A Beatles song."

Luckily,
The words were printed
On the album cover.

E. Pogo Costley

MOSQUITO-----MAN
HYPOCRISY

I lay a blood-red beefsteak
on my patio grill,
And watch the sizzle of crimson nectar
Splattering white-hot embers.

I hear a minute whine, a persistent
sound that is a mimicry of a
balloon protesting as someone
pinches its neck.

I swipe a fleshy hand
at the sound,
my lone defense against a
bloodthirsty fiend on a relentless
life's mission,

Desiring to suck the essence of
life from my veins,
in order to prolong its own.

One vice to satisfy —
Survival.

The thought of defeat to this
tiny devil infuriates me;
I will slay the man-eater if I can.

This battle must be fought another day.
My steak is done.
Just the way I like it.
Rare.

Jack Folk

MY SENIOR YEAR

Today holds. . .
Sweatshirts and jeans
Muted grays against faded blue
—And you
What will tomorrow hold?

Today holds. . .
Homecoming and Exams
The excitement and anxiety of school
—And you
What will tomorrow hold?

Today holds. . .
Classrooms and Dorms
Myriads of friends, old and new
—And you
What will tomorrow hold?

Tomorrow holds. . .
Bright promises of
Something old, new, borrowed, and blue
—And You.

Melanie Lynch

NIGHTFALL

Graying shadows penetrate the daylight,
forcing the orange and blue from the sky;
the silver crests ring on the cold sand,
seemingly unaware of what awaits;
and the last birds scatter across the barren beach
salvaging what remains
before nightfall.

Roberta Lyn Borden

NIGHTMARE

The demon in my room sat poised, ready to pounce.
I dared not close my eyes, but I must have dozed
For I felt the creature moving through me like a dose of salts.
I tried hard to get awake, but failing that, I yelled and sprang
to my feet.
We struggled on the floor.
The fight had begun in earnest.
I reached for a knife (I have several) and stabbed frantically,
but only I was bleeding.
Next I reached to get my gun, but I couldn't get it loaded.
I reached for a sword and pulled, but all I did was pull.
I couldn't heave it overhead.
I tried my pen and pencil, but they wouldn't even make a mark.
I threw my books — the best I had, but arguments had no effect.
Force of body left me first, but the will was weary too.
Even so I couldn't surrender, for my life was threatened.
With renewed energy I hurled everything that was loose and
loosened what was not.
From the ceiling to the floor and from wall to wall
Everything was spinning, sometimes upside down.
I wasn't planted firmly anywhere, and I could sense defeat.
I found a whole box of dynamite hurling in midair.
I would do or die and maybe both.
Surely the creature would let me be if I could level one final blast.
I properly inserted a cup and fuse.
I was dizzy and falling fast.
I knew that I was about to fall hard upon my face.
I struck my match (with some difficulty because it seemed to be
getting wet) and lit the fuse which fizzled and went out.
But there was some sort of explosion, and I found myself sitting
in a puddle in the middle of my bed.
My head was between my knees, and my hands were clasped
tightly behind my head.
I was rolled into a posture that must have made me look
rather small.
When my son stuck his head in at the door and said,
"Practicing Yoga?"

Ernest Blankenship

NINE DREAMS

- #1. Brilliant colors wash
Over my body.
Nothing exists
But marmalade and memories.
- #2. Two figures
In a sea of feedback
Discussing tea.
- #3. A single cartoon
Thoughts of never-never
Blinkin' . . .
Winkin' . . .
Nod.
- #4. Tiny porcelain statues
Playing tag
In a man's mind.
- #5. Dreams
Of a man dreaming
Nine dreams
And forgetting.
- #6. Deja Vu.
- #7. Cloned goals:
That makes a pair,
Which beats all hands
Across the water.
- #8. Distant shores
No longer distant:
Premonitions of that which is
Already memories.
- #9. A shot.
Darkness.
Many people sing
In a garden of trees.
A boy plays guitar
On a stone, and gets
Blisters on his fingers.

NOCTURNAL AMPLITUDE MODULATION: ADDICTIVE TONES

The complacency of hearing
a familiar voice
When I am prostrate
in the night
Becomes the separation
between the chaff of
sleeplessness and the wheat
of celestial slumber.

Just knowing you are
beside me,
A lifelong comrade who
is there with a reassuring
verbal communion.

Or you transpire some
new tiding that might
alter my life come dawn,
So I will not remain in
darkness once the light of
day returns.

Over countless miles you
journey
Just to break the nocturnal
silence,
To pierce the obscure blackness
with your addictive tone.

And if the stance you
take is dissident to mine,
I will simply force a change
in your dogmatic view
Until my search proves fruitful
and my ears rejoice again.

I then return to tranquil
balmy-somnolence,
Knowing who you are
as the twenty years before.

Jack Folk

NO REASON TO DESPAIR

The fluorescent light and nicotine haze
along with the gaze of an addict's mother
force my eyes to close for an all too fleeting
moment, opening to the greeting of the chipped
and yellowed pre-fabricated ceiling scarred
forever with cobwebs and stained by the water
which pools on the roof and seeps through
the cracks of the roofing.

I can hear drops of water smacking the sidewalk,
one after another in endless mindless repetition.
Drop by drop,
tear by tear,
they plunge — not arching gracefully or even
spiralling in one last attempt at rebellious
bravado. They plunge — facing fate directly
and surely, rupturing against the pavement
where they pool and then follow the piper's
call to the drainage ditch, much as a
gaunt and embittered poet would retreat to
the sea, seeking empathy and perception.
He longs to be the sea, where beauty devours
impurity, and in a tidal communion he is
consumed and extinguished and crowned
unvanquished in the fiery blaze of the funeral
pyre—a pagan fire which entices me and calls
me closer till I stand at the fringe entranced
by the flickering flames in which I see Aunt
Bea, as stubborn and stern in the casket as
she was in the cold steel bed of the nursing home.
The coffin is heavy. The rain is chilling, and
I feel the cold pooling beneath my eyes as
again I see the overturned van and the shattered
glass and the young newlywed twisted and bleeding,
a dead branch protruding from a scrap pile of
metal I washed for her the week before.

I remember the perspiration trickling down my
brow as I stood by the graveside, huddled under
the canopy and overcome with the bittersweet
scent of lilacs and roses anchored and twisted
in styrofoam to form bibles and crosses,
kin to the holly of a Christmas candle from
which the wax slowly trickles,
drop by drop,
down the length of the candle and pools on
the stand where it cools and hardens,
broadened and deepened with each tiny splash
issued forth from the flame — a minute pinhole
of light which pierces the darkness and like
a firework explodes into a shower of sparks
which flames brilliantly across the sky as
a phoenix reborn and then drifts gently down
to earth in a spiralling, twisting staircase
alighting gingerly upon the ground as glowing
embers, warm and alive, which nourish the soil
for harvests yet to come.

Danny Reece

THE SEEKER

"I'm seeking," you say.

For whom? For what?

Two thousand years ago I came—

the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Does one seek for what has already been revealed?

Your "seeking" looks the twin of rejection.

Thirlen Osborne

ON LOSING A FATHER

(Written two years before my father's death)

The dread grey

stole you from my world.
Not the grey that touched your hair
for you remained hard-muscled
and deep-lunged years beyond that tint.

The grey of pain

was the culprit that swift snatched you
from the life of light and laughter,
and imprisoned you in the blue chair
between the warm stove and the window,
pain sunbursting from the sleepless muscle-pump
whenever strong exertion called
for more life-sustaining oxygen
than narrowing arteries would allow.

I remember you

as the sun-bronzed giant of my childhood
whose strong arms swung me, laughing
upon your work-hardened shoulders,
whose long strides kept my short legs churning
through Sunday's sunlit hours,
up steep hills and across wide fields,
when we quenched body's thirst by clear, sweet streams,
and fed our souls on God's bright beauty
crammed into His widest chapel.

Then you were mine,

no work or grow-up tasks to claim you
until the sun began to sink
and we turned our faces homeward.

And now the grey

of isolation shrinks your world.
Your trips outside are short and few,
your world is mainly what you see
through the window by your chair,
and the make-believe world of television.

I've watched the grey

creep up and over all your life,
greying your skin, your voice, your eyes
with the dread grey of imprisonment.
How I long to paint that grey away,
to give to you strength of lungs and heart,
of arms and legs, as you gave to me
unstintingly of your love
through all my years.

But through the grey

I see the shining red of faith,
for red is life endless and strong,
and beyond the grey of age and death
your life is strong and full, and free.
And one day I will catch up with you
as you stride through fields
fairer than any we have known.

—*T. Max Linnens*

OFFICIAL HERO

One Herculean stroke the
Titan wrought upon this
alabaster orb,
With fervent hope a missile
be propelled with piercing
whack of white ash striking
horsehide.

Instead, a laceration hindered flight
to the intended destination of
this sphere.

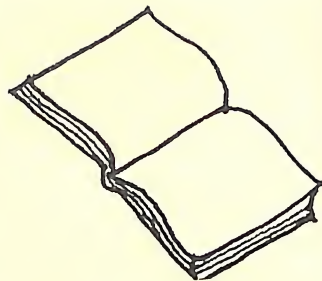
A filament of redness
suddenly burst forth
into a rolling hobble upon
the diamond,
A rose-colored counterpole
to this olive-green savanna.

No Ruthian clout was this,
but yet,
Himself it did enthrall.

For he had knocked the
cover off the ball!

Jack Folk





OPENING DOORS

I approach a door or a book with care before I open.
One never knows what is just beyond.
Even though I have opened many books and many doors and
 have been greatly gratified with the good that I have found.
I have also many times found other things.
I would not, however, have, by choice, missed any of them.
As doors and books hold secrets beyond, they beckon
And I go on searching for new books and doors to open.
I always approach with anticipation, and I am usually surprised.

Ernest Blankenship

THE SHELL

I saw a little sunrise shell
just within my reach;
I picked it up and took it to
my castle on the beach.

I laid it down so gently
by a broken butterfly;
One lost the freedom of the sea—
the other, of the sky.

The treasures in my castle,
like valued gifts to me,
Will someday go when high tide comes
to take them out to sea.

Susan Hawkins

SPLASH

Two eddies in perfect symmetry:
Tiny jeweled jacuzzis of marble
filled with amber oil.

Glistening swirls cast reflections
In all directions, hypnotically.
I stand transfixed, contemplating,
Anticipating a good wash.

Splash.
Draw me deeper
Centrifugal force
To the drain, and beyond
Into her mind.

Let my splash
Run down her cheek
That I may know
I've touched her heart.

E. Pogo Costley

MOM

I can still see the drifting ruffles floating around your face
as you peer out at me, shaking your head and smiling
as I sit layered in muck, waving the once red shovel.

With fingers braided, I would dance along your side,
"Fishers of Men" shrilly flying from my throat as I
was led into the dull, bricked Sunday School building
or sometimes up the paint-chipped steps to shake the pastor's hand.

I remember the anger and fear which shook my shoulders
and turned my stomach when I saw your tears in the blaring, August sun.
I, like the sterile surgeon with scalpel blazing, had begun to sever and cut.
How delicious was the sweet powerful pain I wielded!

Now I smile but catch myself while imbibing delirium,
and think of a magnet, You, which pulls my face into a different smile.
How I would crawl stealthily through the phone, if I could,
and see you look at me now,
Evenly, and happy.

Roberta Lyn Borden

ONCE UPON A TIME

Once upon a time I could make you laugh and light up
Your eyes like the stars in the night;
And once upon a time I could make you love me and come to
Me when it was you that I needed.

Once upon a time I was your lady and it was only my love
That you strove to win and possess;
And once upon a time I was the love of your life; your reason
For living.

I once had your love and your soul to call my own. I possessed
The means by which to make you mine.

But that was once upon a time, and once upon a time only
Occurs — once upon a time.

Kimberly Porter

TWO SONGS

I have admired you
From a distance:
Now, up close
I will gaze deep
Into your eyes,
Listen closely
To the music of your voice,
And carefully measure
The warmth in the touch
Of your hand.

I shall pray that you, too,
Can find some semblance of peace
In my dim eyes, and that
You will learn
To hear the music
That swells within me
For you.

E. Pogo Costley

SILENCE

I walk in the woods while a bright orange sun beams upon me.
Dirt, black and rich with minerals, clings to my feet as I tread
along.

A mocking bird's mimicking varied call rings in my ear.
Wind is blowing with great intensity, whistling as if it were a
frighting man alone.

Greyish-slimy clay clings to the bank of the crooked creek.
While beneath, water trickles over the smooth sand-ground rocks.
I fetch a leaf of sassafras from its wiry stem;
Raising it to my mouth, I pucker my lips from the bitter-green
taste.

The smell of freshly cut pine enchants my nose, making me
draw deeper breaths into my lungs—

The cool-mint scent refreshing me totally.

I become engrossed in this world of peace,
And I wonder what the other world offers to so many and offered
to me.

Chuck Haynes

THE KEEPER

I am the Admirer.

The Admirer of my strong will
to do what I want to do.

The Admirer of my discretion
to know when to do it.

I am the Listener

The Listener to the plants and animals
When I need them.

The Listener to my friends
When they need me.

I am the Mender.

The Mender of speech
When abused or improperly spoken.

The Mender of hearts,
broken or bruised.

I am the Forgiver

The Forgiver of those who
insult me or criticize me.

The Forgiver of the fate that
brings me misfortune.

I am the Scorer.

The Scorer of the prejudiced,
the violent, the cruel.

The Scorer of those who
scorn me.

I am the Keeper.

The Keeper of all these things.
The Keeper of all that I am.

Erika LeMay

THINKING OF YOU

Standing here I think of you
As I look over His awe-inspiring creation—
The sumptuous mountains towering above the serene valleys
Where a stream flows quietly into a lake
Glistening like a silver coin fresh from the mint.
Upon the horizon is the sunset, bathing the distant hills
In streams of orange, blue, and violet,
To express the departure of another day.

I know how you love the mountains and long to be here
Where each breath of pure air brings a sense of peace
And the miracles seen in nature surround me.
You say it is here where you feel closer to your Maker—
I do, too.

Now another day has come to an end.
The streams of orange, blue, and violet have been replaced by
A blanket of darkness.
The night lights of heaven flicker above
As the creatures of the night sing and the trees wave
Their long leafy arms as I walk quietly away
Thinking of you.

Bobby Hammond

THIRD BASE

I inspect the antagonist in his home camp.
He leers back at me with
mayhem on his mind.
His white ash weapon is ready
to strike the horsehide globe.
His fervent hope to deal me a
death blow by lashing the
ivory projectile down the line at
railway speed,
A ghost-like blur to seal my doom.

Uncoiling his crouching body like a rattlesnake springing
at a victim
My enemy unleashes all his fury
on the alabaster orb.

Instinct takes over;
I have no time to cogitate.

Hand of dirty brown leather shoots up;
the missile is aborted!

Next batter.

Jack Folk

WATCH YOUR STEP

Taking my daily walk,
I stumbled onto an unusual substance.
It was coal black and filled with rocks.
My nostrils stung from the pungent odor.
Bravely, I began to cross the smooth but sticky matter.
Suddenly, there was a roaring sound coming closer and closer.
The earth vibrated beneath all four of my worn, torn feet.
Then there was a short screech and a loud thump.
Voices in the distance came nearer and nearer.
As a tall, dark shadow hovered over me,
Instinctively I withdrew into myself.
Grasped gently but firmly from the mysterious earth,
I was jostled for what seemed like an eternity.
Lowered into spikelike blades of golf green grass,
I noticed I was not alone.
There, ahead were two dull, hulled fellow terrapins,
One to the left and the other to the right.
Hiding in a protective shell,
I feared for my life.
As my newly acquainted friends slowly strolled away,
A tall giant carefully aimed a rectangular object at us.
Whatever it is, I refuse to stick my neck out again to see.

Janet Kay Curry

STUDENT MISTATEMENTS WITH RETORTS

1. "Lydia is sitting on a **soda** reading a book."
I'll bet that soda is cold. Why doesn't she get on the **sofa**?
2. "Haidee after seeing Juan wounded bursts a vein and goes into a **comma**."
Far be it from me to slight the comma, but Haidee's problem was a **coma**.
3. "Some men send their wives **orchards** on their wedding anniversary or Easter."
Some men have to overdo everything. Most men send only **orchids**.
4. "She made heaven sound like a **providence** of some sort, where nothing would suit the needs of a young boy."
I doubt that Providence would create a **province** like that.
5. "Years ago a home cooked meal was something taken for **granite**."
Come on! Not even the biscuits were that hard. You are just taking for **granted** what someone told you.
6. "When I was five a snake bit me on the **bottom foot**."
Be thankful it didn't bit your top foot also.
7. [Thanatopsis] "That's the little girl in **Uncle Tom's Cabin**, ain't it?"
No it "ain't." You are thinking about Topsy.
8. "When one of the teachers tried to give her tips on how to teach, she got real mad and lost her **temple**."
That's the last thing one should lose—her **temper** perhaps, but never her temple.
9. "If I have freedom in my love
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that **snore** above
Enjoy such liberty."
The angels do that too? They also **soar**.
10. "Then came the **sadist** of all. Following close behind the pallbearers was the wife of the dead man along with the other members of the family."
Isn't it just like a wife to be a sadist to her husband, yet appear the **saddest** of all at his funeral?
11. "We were supposed to have a test, and I had **wrecked** my brain the night before."
The result of the test showed something had happened. If she had merely **racked** her brain, she might have done better.
12. "Then she asked him to thread a needle and then she dropped a piece of **leg** in his lap."
A piece of leg in his lap might have been more effective than a piece of **lead** to determine if the disguised Huck was a boy or a girl.
13. "David does not smoke, drink, or use **profound** language."
But what about **profane** language? Does he use that?

14. "So many adults think that teenagers are nothing more than drunks and dope **attics** that like a wild time and which have no sense of maturity.
It is hard to tell what some teenagers have stored in their attics, but most adults know that most teenagers are not drunks and dope **ad-dicts**."
15. "Cleopatra believes that Caesar only wants to **taint** her."
Another Caesar had already done that. She believes this one wants to **taunt** her."
16. "Chivalry was a code of honor for the **nights**."
What code did the **knights** use in the daytime?"
17. "Some of them went into the slums to preach the **gossip** to the other people."
Usually there have been those who preferred to preach something besides the **gospel**."
18. In Parkman's "The Buffalo Chase," how do buffalo bulls try to protect their females in a chase? "They try to protect them by running on horseback."
Smart bulls, but pity the horses."
19. Why can Winston Churchill claim to be half American? "Because he was born in Italy."
Maybe he was an Italian American."
20. "Resolve to be thyself; and know that he
Who finds himself **shall live in agony**."
Perhaps. I suppose it depends on what kind of self one finds. The poet hopes that when one finds himself, he **loses his misery**."
21. Who is the author of the **Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation?**
"the **Vulnerable Beade**."
Most of us are vulnerable, but this **Bede** was **Venerable**."
22. "It was about this time that Burns made acquaintance with Highland Mary for **consolidation**."
How true! That was his **consolation**."
23. "Sweet Helen, make me **immoral** with a kiss."
She might do this too, but the request came from one who thought a kiss from Helen would make him **immortal**."
24. About Helen again: "Was this the face that **sunk** a thousand ships?"
Well, according to Marlowe, her face **launched** them."
25. "Most teachers give poor **remarks** to someone that does not have good English."
They sometimes give poor **marks** also, so beware!"

Thirlen Osborne